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A 3

FRIENDLY VISIT

TO THE

House of Mourning.

IN THE DAY OF ADVERSITY CONSIDER.

Eccl. vii. 14.

Many are the sayings of the Wise,
In ancient and in modern books enroll'd,
Extolling Patience—
But to th' afflicted in his pangs their sound
Little prevails; or rather seems a tune
Harsh, and of dissonant mood from his complaint,
Unless he feel within
Some source of consolation from above;
Secret refreshings that repair his strength,
And fainting spirits uphold.

MILTON.

THE SIXTH EDITION.

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THEATRUM MATERIA
MUNDI

BY JAMES GUTHRIE

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—~~be with him his spouse, health, I say, &
blown I say to you A~~ ~~considering that~~
~~you had~~ ~~considering~~ ~~intended~~ ~~valqua~~

FRIENDLY VISIT, &c.

YOUR present affliction, my Dear Friend, demands something more than the usual forms of condolence.—Sorrow, which like yours, cannot be prevented, may yet be *alleviated*, and *improved*.—This is my design in addressing you, and if I seem to intrude upon your retirement, let my motive be my apology. Having felt how much better *it is to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting*¹;—having received my best *Lessons*, *Companions*, and even *Comforts*, in it; I would administer from my little stock of experience: and while I thus endeavour to assist your meditations, shall rejoice if I may contribute, though but a mite, to your comfort.

¹ Eccl. vii. 2.

Were I, indeed, acquainted with the peculiar circumstances of your loss, I should employ particular considerations: but my present address can have only a *general* aim; which is to acquaint the heart, at a favourable moment, with its grand concerns;—to give it a serious impression when *softened*; and a heavenly direction when *moved*.—Let us, therefore, sit down humbly together in this house of mourning:—If the heart of the wise be found¹ here, your experience, I hope, will prove that here also it is formed:—and let us calmly contemplate some momentous Objects intimately connected with it, and viewed with peculiar advantage from it.

OUR GOD is the first of these objects: with Him we seldom form any close acquaintance till we meet him in trouble.—He commands silence now, that He may be heard; and removes intervening objects, that He may be seen. A SOVEREIGN DISPOSER appears, who, as *Lord of all*, hath only resumed what he lent;—whose will is

¹ Eccl. vii. 4.

the law of his creatures; and who expressly declares his will in the present affliction. We should seriously consider that all allowed repugnance to the determinations of his government (however made known to us) is SIN; and that every wish to alter the appointments of his wisdom is FOLLY;—we know not what we ask. When God discovers himself in any matter, those who know him, will keep silence before him². Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him?—How just was the reply; ‘Behold I am vile!—what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth³.’

This silent submission under trying dispensations, is variously exemplified as well as inculcated in the scriptures. An awful instance of sin and sorrow occurs in the family of Aaron: his sons disregarded a divine appointment, and *there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them*; but Aaron held his peace³.—Eli, in similar circumstances, silenced his heart with this single but

² Hab. ii. 20.

² Job xl. 2, 4.

³ Lev. x. 2, 3.

sufficient consideration, “ *It is the Lord*”¹—David under a stroke which he declares consumed him, observes, “ *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because thou didst it*”²—And Job, when stript of every comfort, blessed the name of him who *took away*, as well as *gave*³.—Whatever be the nature of your calamity, may it be attended with such an humble and childlike spirit as these possessed!

But the Sovereign Disposer is also the **COMPASSIONATE FATHER**.—Among other instances of his tenderness, you may have observed the peculiar supports he affords under peculiar trials.—Let us mark, and acknowledge, the hand whichmingles mercy with judgment, and alleviation with distress.—The parents I have just mentioned lost their children under circumstances far more distressing than yours;—The desire of your eyes (if not the idol of your heart) was, perhaps, almost a stranger;—you strove hard to detain it, but He,

¹ 1 Sam. iii. 18.

² Ps. xxxix. 9.

³ Job i. 21.

who took the young children into his arms and blessed them, took yours; and, taking it, seemed to say, *what I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter*¹;—patiently suffer this little one to come unto me, for of such is my kingdom² composed:—*Verily I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father*³!—“If I take away your child, “ I take it to myself—Is not this infinitely “ beyond any thing you could do for it?—“ Could you say to it, if it had lived, “ thou shalt weep no more,—*the days of thy mourning are ended*⁴?—Could you “ shew it any thing in this world like the “ glory of God, and of the Lamb⁵?—“ Could you raise it to any honour here “ like receiving a crown of life⁶?”

The voice of a *Father of mercies and a God of all comfort*⁷ speaks as distinctly in the death as in the birth of an infant. A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and

¹ John xiii. 7.

² Matth. x. 14.

³ Matth. xviii. 10.

⁴ Isa. xxx. 19.

⁵ Rev. xxii. 23.

⁶ James i. 12.

⁷ 2 Cor. i. 3.

bitter weeping; *Rachel*, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted, because they were not. *Thus saith the Lord,*
 ‘ *refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears, for there is hope in thine end,* saith the *Lord*, *that thy children shall come again to their own border*¹.—*It is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones should perish*².’

Is it a pious friend that has just yielded up his breath?—The same voice seems to say, ‘ *turn from him, or rather turn from his clay, — his faded garment, — He himself is taken from the evil to come; — He is entered into peace*³.’

When the able Minister, the exemplary Parent, or the faithful Partner depart, a consternation often seizes the circles which they blessed. We are so stunned by the sudden blow, or occupied with the distressing circumstances, that we scarcely can hear God saying ‘ *Fear not, I even I am he*’

¹ Jer. xv. 17.

² Matt. xviii. 14.

³ Isa. lvii. 1, 2.

‘ *that*

‘that comforteth you¹’ :—‘I, your Father,
am yet alive;—I gave you your departed
friend;—I sent every benefit which was
conveyed through him;—trust me for
blessings yet in store;—trust me with him,
and with yourselves.’

Whatever notions one who lives *without God in the world* may form of dying, *We* should learn from his word to regard the departure of the just merely as a *Translation*,—a change in which nothing is lost which is really valuable.—As surely as we believe that *Jesus died and rose again*, so surely do we believe that *them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him*².—Taught of God, we should view Losses, Sickness, Pain, and Death, but as the several trying stages by which a good man, like Joseph, is conducted from a *Tent* to a *Court*.—*Sin* his disorder;—*Christ* his physician;—*Pain* his medicine;—the *Bible* his support;—the *Grave* his bed;—and *Death* itself an Angel, expressly sent to release the worn-out Labourer, or crown the faithful

¹ Isa. li. 12.

² 1 Thess. iv. 14.

Soldier.—I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works follow them¹.

But admitting the state of your departed friend to be doubtful, yet in all cases that are really so, let us cultivate honourable thoughts of God; let us remember the FAITHFUL CREATOR. Righteousness is his throne though clouds surround it.— Whatever he has left obscure we may safely leave him to explain.—Let us recollect that amidst innumerable obscurities, he hath made things clear in proportion as they are important; and therefore repeatedly urges it upon our conscience, that the door is still open to us;—that it is awful to stand before it *unresolved*;—that we must trust him to-day;—and that to-morrow he will equally remove our conjectures and our complaints.

¹ Rev. xiv. 13.

Perhaps

Perhaps you are ready to reply ‘*I have heard many such things: and I also could speak as you do, if your soul were in my soul’s stead*¹: but my heart, and my expectations are so crushed by this blow, that I can hear nothing but “*thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound grievous;—thou hast no healing medicines*².”

Beware, however, of falling into their sin who *limited the Holy One of Israel*³.—There is a charge continually brought against man, that in his troubles, the Source and the Resource are equally forgotten.—*Though affliction cometh not forth of the dust*⁴,—yet none saith where is God my Maker who giveith *Songs in the night*⁵?—Endeavour then, in extremities, to recollect an **ALL-SUFFICIENT FRIEND**—a very present **HELP** in trouble.—He at least may add (as he does in the passage just alluded to) ‘*I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord*.⁶—

Cannot the voice which rebuked a tem-

¹ Job xvi. 2, 4.

² Jer. xxx. 12. 13.

³ Ps. lxxviii. 41.

⁴ Job v. 6.

⁵ Job xxxv. 10.

pestuous sea calm our troubled spirits? Is his hand shortened at all, that he cannot *bless our latter end*, like Job's, *more than the beginning*¹? Is it not the Lord that *maketh poor and maketh rich; that bringeth low and liftest up*²?—Many, whose hearts have been desolate like yours, while they have looked *around*, have at length *looked UPWARD unto Him and been lightened*³.—A single promise has afforded them not only relief, but strong consolation.

Let us, therefore, my Dear Friend, *turn again to this strong hold as prisoners of hope*:—*even to-day can he render double to us*⁴. Let us look to Abraham's God, and his encouragement is ours; ‘*Fear not.—I am ¹ GOD ALMIGHTY*⁵.—q. d. I am all-sufficient in all cases:—I am enough;—and able to do exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think⁶.—I have taken away thy Gourd, but dost thou well to be angry?—have I left nothing for thankfulness?—this world, however, cannot be your

¹ Job xlii. 12.

² 1 Sam. ii. 7.

³ Ps. xxxiv. 5.

⁴ Zech. ix. 12.

⁵ Gen. xvii. 1.

⁶ Eph. iii. 20.

‘ home, nor its objects your consolation : they
 ‘ are all too poor for the soul of man.—Look
 ‘ unto Me and be saved ¹ :—acquaint thy-
 ‘ self with Me and be at peace ² :—follow
 ‘ Me and you shall not walk in darkness,
 ‘ but have the light of life ³.—However
 ‘ dark and distressing the present state of
 ‘ things may appear, commit thy fatherless
 ‘ children to my care, I will preserve them
 ‘ alive ; and let the widows trust in me ⁴.’

Still the beloved object is gone, and your heart follows it.—You can scarcely receive counsel from infinite Wisdom, or comfort from Omnipotence. To every fresh encouragement you are ready to reply ‘ *wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?*—*shall the dead arise and praise thee?*—*shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave?* or *thy faithfulness in destruction* ⁵?—His word repeatedly assures you they shall ; and that *all that are in the graves shall hear his voice* ⁶ ; but it informs you also, that He can do abundantly

¹ Isa. xlvi. 22.

² Job xxiii. 21.

³ John viii. 12.

⁴ Jer. xlix. 11.

⁵ Ps. lxxxviii. 10, 11.

⁶ John v. 28.

more

more for the living than merely restore their dead friends, or revive their fainting spirits;—it teaches you that He can sanctify the separation,—that He can give a divine life to the survivor, *though dead in trespasses and sins*¹, and inseparably unite both in his kingdom.—If the Comforter could make up for the loss of *Christ's* bodily presence; yea, make it even *expedient* that *He should go away*²; how much more can he supply the place of every creature?

May this COMFORTER, writing his word in your mind, help you to say with a confidence highly honourable to himself and his Gospel, ‘my poor perishing gourd is, indeed, withered a day before I expected it;—my broken reed is gone;—but God is left,—a father to the fatherless,—an husband to the widow³,—and now, Lord, what wait I for? truly my hope is in thee⁴.—Thou canst give me, in thine house, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters, even an ever-

¹ Eph. ii. 1.

² John xvi. 7.

³ Ps. lxxviii. 5.

⁴ Ps. xxxix. 7.

• lasting

‘ lasting name which shall not be cut off’;
 ‘ and therefore, though the fig-tree shall
 ‘ not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the
 ‘ vine, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I
 ‘ will joy in the GOD OF MY SALVATION.’²

Once more; let us endeavour, at such seasons as these, to recognize a GRACIOUS MONITOR.—Whenever the Lord strikes, he speaks.—Let us listen at such a time as this with humble attention, yet with holy confidence, for it is the voice of a *Friend*,—a wonderful *Counsellor*.—Let us with the Prophet resolve to ascend the tower of observation, and observe *what he will say unto us, and what we shall answer when we are reproved*.—If with him we thus watch our dispensation, *at the end*, like his, it shall speak³.

God is continually raising up witnesses, and sending them in his name to *sound the alarm in Zion*⁴.—He charges them to admonish the wise, as well as the foolish Virgin, to beware of slumbering, since the bridegroom is at hand: and when one is

² Isa. vii. 5.

³ Hab. iii. 17, 18.

⁴ Hab. ii. 1—3.

⁴ Joel ii. 1.

called away, to cry to those that remain, ' *be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh*¹.'—Some, indeed, like the sons of Lot, desperately scorn the admonition, and treat it as the fear of dotage².—Some, like those in the Acts, *are in doubt, saying one to another, ' what meaneth this?'*—and others mocking reply ' *these men are full of new wine*³.'—But TRUTH, like a Rock furiously assaulted, but unshaken, remains to scorn its scorers: and, while the witnesses continue to bear a faithful and consistent testimony, God, sooner or later, appears in vindication of their integrity and his own word.—Entering a careless family, he smites the first born; and, as one that will be heard, calls aloud ' *Awake thou that sleepest; arise from the dead; and Christ shall give thee light*⁴'.

And is it not, my Afflicted Friend, an infinite mercy, if, by any means, God will enter with such a *light*,—that he will rouse

¹ Matth. xxiv. 44.

² Gen. xix. 14.

³ Acts ii. 12, 13.

⁴ Eph. v. 14.

such a *Sleeper*? — that, by his minister *Death*, he will arrest the attention of him who has flighted every other minister? — What patience! what long suffering! to take such an one apart; — bring him from noise and occupation into the secret and silent chamber; speak to his heart; and seal the most important truths on it, by the most affecting impressions? — Is it not saying
 ‘ *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?*
 ‘ *how shall I make thee as Admah*¹?’ — certain it is, that questions, which before only reached the ear, often now, like barbed arrows, remain fixed in the conscience — conscience, no longer stifled or amused, discovers the **CONTENDER**, and trembling before him, cries ‘ *Thou hast chastised me,*
 ‘ *and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me and*
 ‘ *I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord*
 ‘ *my God*².’

This, I say, is often the case, and should it be realized in yours, as it has been in that of your present Visitor; — if, instead of

¹ Hosea xi. 8.

² Jer. xxxi. 18.

flying for relief to every object but God, you are brought humbly to his feet with patient submission, serious enquiry, fervent prayer, holy resolution, and firm reliance; —if, in a word, by the severest stroke, the enchantment is also broken,—your soul *escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler*¹, and returned to its proper REST; what reason will you have to say

Those we call wretched are a chosen band.—
Amid my List of Blessings infinite,
Stand this the foremost,—‘That my heart has bled.’—
For All I bless Thee;—Most, for the severe;
Her death,—my own at hand—

—But death at hand (as an old writer expresses it,) should be death in view, and lead us to consider next

OUR PROSPECTS from this House of Sorrow, as the inhabitants of a present and future world.—Many suppose that they can

best contemplate the *present* world, by crowding the *house of mirth*¹; their whole deportment, however, shews that it makes them much too giddy for serious observation:—*having eyes they see not*².

Look at the deceased, and contemplate present things. His days an *hand breadth*;—his beauty consumed like the *moth-fretten garment*;—his cares and pleasures a *dream*;—his attainments as the *grass*, which flourisheth in the morning, and in the evening is cut down and withereth;—his years a *tale*;—his strength, *labour and sorrow*. So soon is the whole *cut off and fled*, that we cannot help repeating with the Psalmist, *Verily, every man—at his best estate—is altogether VANITY*³,—*or a vapour that appeareth for a little while and then vanishes away*⁴.

Few, perhaps, reflect, when they follow a friend to his grave, that life itself exhibits little more than a funeral procession, where friend follows friend, weeping to-day and wept for to-morrow. While

¹ Eccl. vii. 4. ² Mark viii. 18. ³ Ps. xxxix and xc.

⁴ James iv. 14.

we are talking of one, another passes—we are alarmed, but behold a third! There is, however, relief in this very reflection; ‘ my friend is gone, but am I weeping as if I were to stay?—Is he sent for in the morning? in the afternoon I shall certainly be called.’ Inconsolable distress, therefore, may ungird our loins, may waste our hours, and cause us to make fatal mistakes in the journey, but does not bring us forward a single step towards meeting our Friends in that state, where present joys and sorrows will be recollected only as the dream of a distempered night.

If, after many former admonitions, an ENEMY still urged us to climb; and, as we ascended, pointed to the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them¹;—if our hearts have been the dupes of the vanishing prospect, and our ears eagerly heard the proposal ‘ all these things will I give thee²;’ let us now hear the voice of a FRIEND, calling us, though in an unexpected way, to commune with our heart

¹ Matth. iv. 8.

² Matth. iv. 9.

and

and be still¹—to know at least in this our day of visitation, the things which belong to our peace²; and also what those things are which hide them from our eyes.

It is at such seasons as these that we more clearly detect the lies of life.—It is in the House of mourning that, what the scripture calls, *lying vanities*, lie peculiarly naked and exposed. Let us here examine what so lately dazzled us. What now is the *purple and fine linen*³ that caught our eye?—What is it to fare sumptuously only for a *day*?—Who is he that cries ‘*Soul thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry*⁴?’—I trust you now feel the deep misery and utter ruin of that dying creature, who can say nothing better to his soul than *this*.—You can scarcely help crying out, ‘*What sottishness, what madness this, in a moment so interesting as Life!—with a prospect so awful as eternity!*’

¹ Ps. iv. 4.

³ Luke xvi. 19.

² Luke xix. 42.

⁴ Luke xii. 19.

The truth is, God speaks variously and incessantly to man respecting his prospects both present and future; but present things seize his heart, blind his eyes, stupify his conscience, and carry him away captive. Now “affliction is God speaking louder,” and striving with the heart of man:—crying, as he has lately in your house, “*Arise and depart, this is not your rest; it is polluted, and, if you persist in attempting to make a rest of it, will destroy you with a sore destruction*”¹.

Our plan, indeed, is the very reverse of his:—we love our native soil, and try to strike our roots deeper and deeper into it:—firmly fixed in earth, we would fain draw our whole life, strength and nourishment from it. And here we should not only *fade as a leaf*², but, with *every tree that beareth not good fruit, be hewn down and cast into the fire*³, did not mercy interpose.

We seldom, however, discern mercy in its *first approach*. Is it *mercy*, say you,

¹ Micah ii. 10.

² Isa. lxiv. 6.

³ Matth. iii. 10.

that

that tears me up by the roots?—that cuts the fibres of sweetest union?—does it prune away the finest branches? nip the loveliest buds? and cover the earth with blossoms?

—Yes, verily,—since the very life of the whole often depends upon the removal of a part, Mercy will wound to heal:—regard to the tree will strip off its most flourishing suckers:—the great Husbandman will not fail to adopt the sharpest means for the improvement of his choicest plants; *for every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit*¹.—Though the Lord cause grief, yet it is in compassion, and according to the multitude of his mercies, for he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men²; but soon or late instructs all his children to say ‘*I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right; and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me*³.’

Let not, therefore, the change of the present scene discompose but direct us:—it

¹ John xv. 2.

² Lam. iii. 32, 33.

³ Ps. cxix. 75.

changes, in order to present the only unchangeable one.—By thus rendering the veils which men try to throw over a dying state, and discovering TEKEL¹ written on every creature, the most careless are often so roused, that they seem to awake and recover themselves:—they appear for a time at least, to become *wise*, to *understand these things*, and seriously to *consider their latter end*². May this salutary impression, however, my Dear Friend, never be worn from *your* mind, but lead you habitually to look from this fading, to that abiding prospect which is to be found only in the ETERNAL WORLD,—and on which it may be necessary here to drop a reflection or two.

I think you must often have remarked that the urgency and bustle of present things, not only raise a cloud of dust before our future prospects, but early beget a false principle that the *present* life is the *only* one.—You must also have observed that ten thousand false maxims, which daily fly through the world, take their rise from this

¹ i. e. wanting. Dan. v. 27. ² Deut. xxxii. 29.

prime falsehood.—Whereas, in fact, the present life, instead of being the *whole*, is comparatively *nothing* :—a *Stage*, a *Porch*, a *Dream*, a weary day's *Journey*. What is this drop to the ocean before us? What this moment to Eternity? As a Theatre, indeed, in which God exhibits the wonders of his providence and grace; or as a Stage, on which we are to act our parts without any opportunity of repetition; the present state is infinitely grand and important: but surely no greater imposition can be put upon the pilgrim than to persuade him that he is at *Home*; or to make him forget and drown his eternal interests in such a vision of the night as Life.

Do you not, my Dear Friend, sensibly perceive this?—While you sit here, does not the cloud break? and the mist subside?—Have you not already so realized a *better*, *that is an heavenly country*¹, as to admire him who pitched only a *tent* here², but steadfastly looked for a *city that hath foundations*³?—Are you not ready to take

¹ Heb. xi. 16.

² Heb. xi. 9.

³ Heb. xi. 10.

*hold of the skirt of this Jew, saying: 'We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'*¹

Seeing this, you only see truths ever exhibited in the scriptures, and living principles in all who are *taught of God*²; for he alone can enable us to use his own discoveries; and how gracious is he, when he removes any object which might prevent our thus seeing Himself, his kingdom, and his righteousness?—or whose removal may prove the occasion of our *seeking* them?

Just before the flood, there were, doubtless, among their *men of renown*³, admired projectors; but there appears to have been but one *truly wise* man among them;—one who saw and seriously regarded his Prospects. And he, *being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an Ark to the saving of his house*⁴. Now such a man is the Christian. He feels *the world passing away with the lusts thereof, but that he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*⁵.—‘I feel,’

¹ Zech. viii. 23.

² John vi. 45.

³ Gen. vi. 4.

⁴ Heb. xi. 7.

⁵ 1 John ii. 17.

says he, ‘ that however finely they dress the
 ‘ pageant of this world, it *passeth by*¹; to
 ‘ a creature like me, going, hastening, such
 ‘ an *Ark* is worth more than ten thousand
 ‘ dying worlds.—Let the *Gay* laugh;—let
 ‘ the *Despisers* wonder and *perish*²;—
 ‘ with such Prospects before me, I must be
 ‘ serious. He that cannot lie has revealed
 ‘ the *terrors* as well as the glories of a fu-
 ‘ ture state:—he speaks of a *worm* that
 ‘ *dieth not, and a fire that is not quench-
 ‘ ed*³, as well as of a *fulness of joy and
 ‘ pleasures for evermore*⁴.—I must not, I
 ‘ dare not, shut my eyes against these awful
 ‘ realities.—I will not sacrifice my soul to a
 ‘ jest, nor miss the single opportunity
 ‘ afforded me for its salvation.—He that
 ‘ calls for my whole heart is worthy of it:
 ‘ while the things which have hitherto en-
 ‘ grossed it, though they cannot *satisfy*, I
 ‘ find they can *ruin* it—I will therefore
 ‘ *arise and go to my Father*⁵,—to my
 ‘ Saviour, who has promised to *cast out*
 ‘ *none that come unto Him*⁶.—Yea,

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 31.² Acts xiii. 41.³ Mark ix. 44.⁴ Ps. xvi. 11.⁵ Luke xv. 18.⁶ John vi. 37.

“doubtless, I count all things but loss that I may be found in him¹,” the true ARK, the only REFUGE, which God has provided for perishing sinners.”

Such a man, indeed, is the *Christian*, but the *Christian*, after all, is but a *Man*.—In a state like this, he needs to be continually reminded of his own principles.—Even the *wise* Virgin slumbers though the Bridegroom is at hand. But a cry is often made in the family, before that which will at midnight awaken the world:—one like that in the house of Pharaoh for his first born; or that so lately heard in *yours*.—A cry, which, while it rouses the Sleeper, fills his eyes with tears and his heart with pangs, often produces such views of God, of the present, and of the eternal state, as all other monitors would have attempted in vain.

Here then, my afflicted, but, I hope, instructed, Friend, let us study the heavenly science of gaining by *losses*, and rising by *depressions*.—Leaving the wilderness, like Moses, let us ascend the mount of scrip-

¹ Phil. iii. 8, 9.

tural discovery, and survey a prospect of which his was but a shadow. Let us look from vicissitude and desolation, to what alone is *incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away*¹; and, in the house of affliction and death, let us contemplate a House not made with hands *eternal in the heavens*².—How refreshing to look from a family bereft of its companions and comforts to *Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; to an innumerable company of angels; and to the general assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven*³!—the only family which cannot be divided;—the only friendship which shall not disappoint our warmest expectation.

‘Glorious as this prospect is’ (perhaps you are ready to reply) ‘I have been long in the habit of viewing it very indistinctly. —My attention has been so fixed on one below, that I live looking *into the Grave* rather than *beyond* it.—My spirits are so broken, my heart so wounded, and my

¹ 1 Pet. i. 4.

² 2 Cor. v. 1.

³ Heb. xii. 22, 23.

• eyes so dim with watching and weeping,
 • that I can hardly read what is before me,
 • or recollect what I read:—If serious re-
 • flection composes me for a few moments,
 • I soon relapse, and seem to lose sight of
 • every support. I indeed severely feel
 • what you say concerning the *present* life,
 • but I view the glories of the *future* like a
 • starving creature, who, looking through
 • the gate of the wealthy, surveys a plenty
 • which but increases his anguish.'

There is, however, this difference at least between your cases; the plenty which you see is *yours*, if you are really willing to accept it.—You never received a gift which was so freely bestowed, or so suited to your necessity, as that *Gift of God*, which is *eternal life through Jesus Christ*!¹—In order to view this more distinctly, let us consider the sufficiency of

¹ Rom. vi. 23.

of beauty of fruitfulness A.—. Signs of calamity.

which has been written in the margin to this edit

as OUR PROVISIONS—*For Wisdom hath built her house, she hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine, and furnished her table.*—She also crieth upon the highest places of the city, ‘who so is simple let him turn in hither,’ and to him that wanteth understanding she saith, ‘come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled;—forsake the foolish and live’.

Man, indeed, is daily reminded by the Thorns at his feet, by the Sweat of his brow, and by the Dust to which he is returning, that his paradise is *lost*²: but Paradise *regained* is considered rather as a mere Idea,—a subject for Poetry. That book however, which I hope you have chosen as your best companion in the house of mourning, like the vision of Jacob, not only shews the heavens opened, but discovers a gracious Medium of communication and intercourse, as it were a ladder let down from

¹ Prov. ix. 1—6.

² Gen. iii. 18, 19.

heaven to earth ¹.—A medium so suited to the state of man, that the weakest and vilest, who is humble enough to take hold of it as God's ordinance;—advance a step at a time;—and call for strength to proceed; may climb by it from Earth to Heaven *.

Are you, my Dear Friend, among the number of those, who stand before God not only as stript of their *comforts* but humbled under sin as the cause of all the desolations with which our fallen state abounds?—Open your book at the 61st chapter of *Isaiah*.—You will there perceive the most precious privilege of paradise restored; the Creator descending to the condition and wants of the creature, and once more holding *communion* with him.—The *broken-hearted*, the *captive*, and the *mourner*, are here shewn one mighty to save and to relieve: and that such should not mistake their friend, our Lord when he stood up in the synagogue to read, he selected this passage, and having read it, he closed the book with

¹ Gen. xxviii. 12.

* Compare *Genesis xxviii.* with *John i. 51.*

saying

saying 'this day is this scripture fulfilled
 in your ears'!—I am, as if he had said,
 'this Deliverer and Desire of nations';
 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for
 ever'; blessed are they that mourn; for
 they shall be comforted;⁴—blessed are ye
 that hunger now; for ye shall be filled:
 blessed are ye that weep now; for ye
 shall laugh.⁵

I scarcely need observe that, in an address
 like this, (a bow drawn at a venture) for-
 mal statements of the different topics would
 be improper; and, therefore, I shall not
 attempt to describe, in their order, the va-
 rious provisions comprehended in that scheme
 of redemption, usually termed the gospel.
 It may be necessary, however, to remark,
 that the whole is a proposal to the *broken*
 heart, answering all its objections, and
 meeting all its wants; and that such a pro-
 posal will be cordially received only in pro-
 portion as this disposition prevails.

As it is the *Sick* who best knows how to
 value a physician, the *Debtor* a surety, and

¹ Luke iv. 21.

² Hag. ii. 7.

³ Heb. xiii. 8.

⁴ Matt. v. 4.

⁵ Luke vi. 21.

the *Criminal* a pardon; so it is the awakened conscience alone which will embrace a constitution calculated to humble the *pride*, and mortify the *corruptions*, as well as relieve the *wants*, of man.—If without *shedding of blood* there can be no *remission*¹, he, who is earnest to obtain it, will rejoice to find it though on the *accursed tree*: and, however the *preaching of this cross* shall be esteemed *foolishness among them that perish*², such an one will not only rejoice in the provision, but magnify the means.

‘*God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world*³.’

Our Lord represents the blessings of his kingdom under the parable of a magnificent feast, which a *King made for the marriage of his Son*; but when *all things were ready*, and invitations repeatedly sent, he points out the ruin of the world in its indisposition to accept his gracious proposal.—*They made light of it, and went their*

¹ Heb. ix. 22.

² 1 Cor. i. 18.

³ Gal. vi. 14.

ways!

ways!—However different their pursuits, they all agree to reject the invitation; they began with *one consent* to make excuse:—some urged reasons, and some abused the messengers;—but what is this more than the history of human nature in every age?¹

Let us, however, my Dear Friend, never forget that the gate lately mentioned*, though strait, is *open*; and that only *unbelief* and *indisposition* stand without. Christ has declared that all things are *ready*; may his gracious influence, accompanying this humbling providence, form in you a spiritual taste for them!—Certain I am that, whenever this is attained, his *name* will be *as ointment poured forth*²;—it will give a favour even to obsolete poetry.

Christ is a path,—if any be milled;
He is a robe,—if any naked be;
If any chance to hunger—he is bread; and of won
If any be a bondman,—he is free;
If any be but weak,—how strong is he!
To dead men life he is;—to sick men health;
To blind men sight;—and to the needy wealth;
A pleasure without loss;—a treasure without stealth.

¹ Matt. xxii. 1—6.

² Page 25.

³ Canticles i. 3.

To prepare the heart for the reception of this treasure, as a God of order, he is pleased to use a system of means; one of which I hope he is now employing for your soul's health.—I love to indulge hope, for affliction is a seed time; and let me freely enquire, since God has called you aside, has spoken so emphatically, and you have had leisure for serious meditation, do not the provisions of the gospel appear new, sufficient, and exactly suited to your case? —Do you not mark that Gold which the thief cannot steal? that Foundation which no tempest can shake? that Life over which death hath no power? and that Peace which the world can neither give nor take away? —Does not the religion of Jesus, that is so forgotten and degraded among men, stand forward now as the *one thing needful*? —Does not his friendship appear now to be *that better part* which *shall not be taken away*¹? and which alone can help in extremities? In the wreck of human affairs, indeed, it is that God often makes

his truth appear; and causes his gospel (like a plank thrown out to the perishing mariner) to be properly known and prized.

“ These are the great occasions which force the mind to take refuge in religion: “ When we have no help in ourselves, “ what can remain but that we look up to “ a higher and a greater Power? and to “ what hope may we not raise out eyes “ and hearts when we consider that the “ GREATEST Power is the BEST.”

“ Surely there is no [truly wise] man “ who, thus afflicted, does not seek succour “ in the Gospel which has brought *Life* “ and *Immortality to Light*. The precepts “ of EPICURUS, who teaches us to *endure* “ what the Laws of the Universe make “ necessary, may silence, but not *content* us. “ The dictates of Zeno, who commands “ us to look with indifference on external “ things, may dispose us to *conceal* our “ sorrow, but cannot *assuage* it. Real al- “ leviation of the loss of friends, and ra- “ tional tranquillity in the prospect of our “ own

“ own dissolution, can be received only
 “ from the promises of Him in whose
 “ hands are life and death, and from the
 “ assurances of another and better state in
 “ which all tears will be wiped from the
 “ eyes, and the whole soul shall be filled
 “ with joy. —— Philosophy may infuse
 “ STUBBORNNESS, but religion only can
 “ give PATIENCE*.”

In health and ease, ingenious speculations
 may amuse and satisfy us; but I think you
 now feel with me, that when he *takes away the desire of our eyes with a stroke*¹,
 our sorrows are too deep to be alleviated
 by the mere Orator or Philosopher; we
 even turn in disgust from him who would
 thus trifle with our case;—we need a sup-
 port the world cannot afford.—‘ I faint,
 ‘ says the wounded soul; I want an al-
 ‘ mighty arm to lean on now; yea a very
 ‘ tender and compassionate one too;—one
 ‘ like that of the Son of Man.—I need a
 ‘ merciful and faithful High-Priest, who
 ‘ having been tempted, knows how to suc-
 two is forgotten and is written again
 * Johnson. * Ezek. xxiv. 16.
 ‘ cour

' cour the tempted¹ ;—that Man of sorrows, that Brother born for adversity, who, being acquainted with grief, can enter into my case, and commune with me in all the peculiarities of my distress.— I now need one, who can quiet me on his own breast, and speak to me with his own voice, weep not, the child is not dead but sleepeth².—Weep not, thou afflicted, tossed with tempest,—when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee³.—It is true, this is the land of death, but I am the resurrection and the life⁴ ;—this is, indeed, a dry and thirsty land where no water is⁵ ; but I will lead you to fountains of living waters:—I will wipe away all tears from your eyes⁶.
 You are ready, perhaps, to say ' O that I knew where I might find him ;'—but religion has been with me rather a case of necessity than the high privilege of communing with such a comforter.—I feel the misery of living at such a distance from my

¹ Heb. ii. 17, 18.

² Luke viii. 52.

³ Isa. xliii. 2.

⁴ John xi. 25.

⁵ Ps. lxxiii. 1.

⁶ Rev. vii. 17.

‘ heavenly

heavenly Friend, (especially at this time,) but want liberty to approach nearer:— Could I indeed repose on the bosom you just mentioned—“ but, alas ! my understanding is clouded, my faith weak, sense strong, and Satan busy in filling my thoughts with false notions, difficulties, and doubts respecting a future state, and the efficacy of prayer *.”—Though I see very gracious proposals made to returning sinners, I tremble to venture;— Death itself reminds me of transgression:— My thoughts fly every where but to God.

We readily acknowledge that among other views of death it should be regarded as the wages of sin:— It is also natural for convinced sinners to tremble before a Judge who charges even angels with folly. However pride may boast, or ignorance presume, He who measures by the standard of a law which is so spiritual as to regard a corrupt desire, will conclude with the apostle, that *every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God*².—A

* Lady Russell's Letters. ¹ Rom. vi. 23. ² Rom. iii. 19.
view

view of the divine character, and of his own, led not only a Publican to smite upon his breast as the seat of apostacy and pollution, and cry, ‘*God be merciful to me a sinner*¹’ but so perfect and upright a man as Job to *abhor himself*, and repent *in dust and ashes*²: I may add that, as we become proficients in their school, we shall be more ready to *confess* than to *complain*;—we shall learn to justify God in any instance of his righteous displeasure; and humbly own, that he has laid upon us far less than our iniquities deserve³.

But while the christian, as a penitent, looks upon him whom he has pierced and *mourns*; as a believer, he looks at him who was wounded for transgression and *hopes*.—He finds it as desperate to doubt the *remedy*, as to deny the *disorder*.—Having formerly rushed headlong with the *presumptuous*, he now fears perishing with the *fearful* and *unbelieving*⁴.—He sees an atonement of God’s own providing; he pleads upon God’s own authority the merit of that blood which

¹ Luke xviii. 13.

² Job xlii. 6.

³ Ps. ciii. 19.

⁴ Rev. xxi. 8.

*cleanseth from all sin¹ , and by thus receiv-
ing the record which God gives of his Son,
he sets his seal to it that God is true².*

Is this, my Dear Friend, in any degree your case?—Fearful, wandering, and wounded as your heart is, does it yet discover a resting place?—Instead of wishing to evade the charge of “ manifold sins and wickedness “ committed by thought, word, and deed “ against the Divine Majesty; is the re-“ membrance of them grievous, and the “ burden of them intolerable?”—Do you sincerely desire to be freed from this burden, and to enter into the glorious liberty of the children of God?—that heavenly commun-
ion and rest which has been mentioned?—
Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world³!—Behold him exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and forgiveness of sins⁴!—
Come to him as a sinner, and touch, with humble confidence, but the *hem of his garment* and you shall be made whole⁵;—
Wait upon him and you shall obtain both

¹ 1 John i. 7. ² John iii. 33. ³ John i. 29.

⁴ Acts v. 31.

⁵ Matt. ix. 21.

strength and liberty; for if the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed¹.

Respecting your sense of weakness, let me add that the *Provision* made for fallen nature, and corresponding to its various wants, is at once a *character* and an *evidence* of our Religion. It is a glorious peculiarity of it, that its *promises* correspond with its *precepts*. To use the language which best conveys its meaning, *The kingdom of God is not in WORD only but also in POWER*².—He who enlightens the blind eyes, undertakes to *strengthen the weak hands, and to confirm the feeble knees*³.—The spirit of wisdom and understanding is sent to be also a *Spirit of might, of grace, and of supplication*⁴.—It is peculiar to our Teacher that he *enables* as well as *instructs* his disciples: he first presents a *prospect* of the inheritance, then a *title* to it through his death, and together with these, affords *strength* to rise and pursue it.—Turn to the 36th chapter of *Ezekiel*, and you will find your case amply provided

¹ John viii. 36.

² 1 Cor. iv. 20.

³ Isa. xxxv. 3—6.

⁴ Compare Zech. xii. 10. with

Eph. i. 19.

for¹, but recollect that it is added, ‘*I will yet for this be enquired of, to do it for them².*—*Is any afflicted, let him pray³.*’

But I must not pass by the temptation you mentioned respecting the efficacy of prayer: you will, perhaps, too readily object, ‘*Here it is that I sink; I prayed earnestly for the life of the deceased; I thought at one time I saw signs of a recovery; but the event makes me fear that I was not heard, and that I have no FRIEND left now in Earth or Heaven.*’

A little consideration will, I hope, shew you your mistake, and prove that a petition may be graciously accepted, when its particular object is not granted. Did not our LORD declare that his Father heard him always⁴?—Are we not told that when *in the days of his flesh he had offered up prayers, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, he was HEARD in that he feared⁵.*? But consider, I pray you, how he was heard:—Certainly not by having the cup *taken away* (a cup

¹ Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27.

² Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

³ James v. 13.

⁴ John xi. 42.

⁵ Heb. v. 7.

at which human nature, however perfectly
must recoil) but in being accepted when he
prayed; in being supported while he drank
it; and in victoriously accomplishing his
grand design through drinking it to the very
dregs.

To come nearer to our own condition,
we find St. PAUL going to CHRIST for de-
liverance from some severe trial which he
calls a *thorn in the flesh*; he tells us that he
also was heard, and in the same way as his
Master; not by being released from suffer-
ing, but by receiving something more ho-
nourable and advantageous; namely, that
Grace which not only supports a Believer
through his trials, but puts a healing virtue
into them.

Far removed from the holy resignation
of our Master, we too much resemble in
our prayers, the impatience of our chil-
dren.—I remember when a sick one of mine
has had some medieine to take, he has called
loudly to me to come and assist him against
those who were endeavouring to force it
down: he, probably, wondered at my re-
fusing to relieve him; but the little sufferer
did

did not consider, though often told, that he was not to be helped in that way; he did not recollect that while I tenderly felt his cry, the very compassion I felt for him, and the desire I had to relieve him, kept me from taking away the bitter draught.

The truth is (and it is a truth frequently told to us) that our heavenly Father always sends his children the things they ask, or better things.—He answers their petitions, in *kind* or in *kindness*. But while we think only of our *Ease*, he consults our *Profit*:—We are urgent about the *Body*, He about the *Soul*:—We call for present *Comfort*, He considers our everlasting *Rest*: and, therefore, when he sends not the very things we ask, he hears us by sending greater *than we can ask or think*¹.

Is any, therefore, afflicted, let him pray; not only in the public sanctuary, or in the retired closet, but let him consider that there is a new and living way, consecrated through the veil² of a Redeemer's human nature, from every scene of retirement or

³ Eph. iii. 20. ² Heb. x. 20.

action to a MERCY SEAT; where he *satisfies the longing soul*, and fills the *hungry soul with goodness*; especially such as *fit in darkness and the shadow of Death*¹. Our very misery and infirmity should, in defect of other preachers, point out the seat of our relief; and direct such frail and depraved creatures to the common Friend of the *weary and heavy laden*. Pouring into his bosom all our complaints, we at once obey his command, honour his character, and obtain his assistance: *for we have not an high priest who cannot be touched by the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the Throne of Grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need². *Is it not a time of need with you?* endeavour, at his command, to approach with an holy confidence for the *supply of all your need according to his riches in glory*³; and, at this time particularly, for the illumination of the understanding.

¹ Ps. cixii. 9. 10.

² Heb. iv. 15, 16.

³ Phil. iv. 19.

nation

nation and comfort of his Holy Spirit.¹ He whom you supplicate not only invites, but reasons with you. ‘*If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?*²’

The religion of education and custom obtains, more or less every where; but serious, vital, spiritual religion is a *case of necessity* with us all. We summon our forces, we ransack our stores, we *spend our money* for *that which is not bread*, and our *labour* for *that which satisfieth not*³; we look every way, and call to every thing, till each in return loudly replies, ‘*It is not in me*’.— Well, indeed, will it be, if, after all our fruitless efforts, we are brought to feel that the provisions of the Gospel are the only *bread* for a hungry soul, the only *balm* for a wounded heart.

However foreign, my Dear Friend, these truths were from your consideration, when we first sat down together, if it shall please him, who *commanded the light to shine*

¹ Luke xi. 13.

² Isa. lv. 1.

³ Job xxviii. 14.

out of darkness¹, to shine into your heart, and effectually discover the exceeding riches of his Grace in these provisions; then, though you fit weeping over your loss, we are assured from unquestionable authority, that Angels are rejoicing² for your unspeakable gain.—We are certain also, that not only every real friend will cry ‘this day is salvation come to the house³ where we lately wept;’ but that, drying your tears, you yourself will be compelled to express your grateful sense of the correction you now deplore, and sing, with a companion and fellow-proficient in the school of affliction⁴,

Father I bless thy gentle hand;
How kind was thy chastising rod
That forc'd my conscience to a stand,
And brought my wand'ring soul to God!

Foolish and vain, I went astray
Ere I had felt thy scourges, Lord;
I left my guide,—I lost my way;
But now I love and keep thy word.

And here, suffer me to drop a word or two respecting these

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 6.
³ Luke xix. 9.

² Luke xv. 10.
⁴ Ps. cxix. 67—71.

OUR COMPANIONS in the house of mourning.—Society is peculiarly pleasant when we are benighted on a journey: and especially that of a citizen of the place to which we are going.—It is encouraging to travel with those, who are convinced that if *they are chastened of the Lord*, it is, *that they should not be condemned with the world*¹.—*Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*²: and here they are educating for it. Here they sit at the foot of the Cross, and receive lessons of faith and patience, of humility and temperance.

*Blessed also are the pure in heart; for they here see God*³; who never so unveils himself as in seasons of distress. In sight of his character and word, they bow before his providence, yea trust him in the stroke; for hope is made to arise here, as a light in darkness. Here the spiritual Husbandman is taught to *go forth weeping, and bearing the precious seed* of faith and love, penitence

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 32.

² Matt. v. 3.

³ Matt. v. 8.

and

and prayer; assured that he shall come again with Joy, bringing his sheaves with him¹. Here also the heavenly Scholar acquires the tongue of the learned, that he should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary². And here the true Soldier of Jesus Christ is found fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold of eternal life³ in the very valley and shadow of death. He is here instructed to cast down imaginations⁴, those reasonings which peculiarly infest and darken the house of mourning; and taking the shield of faith, and the sword of the spirit, he wrestles not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers⁵ :—a mighty though secret conflict which God shall one day declare to the world; and which, when explained, will leave its most celebrated heroes silent in darkness⁶.

‘ Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock⁷,’ for in this house they all have left the prints of their feet.—Here stood,

¹ Ps. cxxvi. 6.

² Isa. l. 4.

³ 1 Tim. vi. 12. ⁴ 2 Cor. x. 5. ⁵ Eph. vi. 12—16, 17.

⁶ 1 Sam. ii. 9.

⁷ Canticles i. 8.

Jacob weeping over his beloved Rachel¹ ; and here Aaron deplored his sons² . Here we trace the steps of David going up to his chamber and crying with a loud voice
“ would God I had died for thee, O Ab-
“ salom my son! my son³ ! ” and those of
 Ezekiel, who, forbidden to cry, silently re-
 signed *the desire of his eyes* to the stroke⁴ .
 But enumeration is vain ; hither came all the
 sons of God, the only begotten not excepted,
 for JESUS himself stood *and wept* at the
 grave of a friend⁵ .

With such company, is it not far *better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting*⁶ ?—I knew one of these,
*a man who had seen affliction by a rod*⁷
 like yours ;—a man who walked and wept
 in solitude, but with no expectation of being
 overheard.—There is something sacred in
 grief, and we cannot listen to its effusions
 with too much candour : great candour, in-
 deed, is here required, but, if afforded, it
 may procure you at least, a *Companion*, as
 you pass through this yale of tears.

¹ Gen. xxxv. 20.

² Lev. x. 3.

³ Sam. xviii. 33.

⁴ Ezek. xxiv. 16.

⁵ John xi. 35.

⁶ Eccl. vii. 2.

⁷ Lam. iii. 1.

***** ‘*Set thee up way-marks*¹;
‘—I desire here to set them up, and to re-
cord the severest of my visitations in the
house of my pilgrimage.—Lord, prepare
me for the next! ’

‘ I perceive I could not have properly
sympathised with a friend in a similar case
before this stroke.—I could not have un-
derstood it.’

‘ I have, at times, so felt the importance
of eternal things, that I thought the loss
of any present comfort would be tolerable:
—but I had no idea how much depended
on being *ready*, when the Son of man
came in such a providence.’

‘ I feel I now stand in the right position
to see the *world* and the *word* ;—they
both appear under aspects entirely new.’

‘ When I find “ my joys pack’d up and
“ gone ;” my heart slain ; the delight of
my eyes taken away ; when I recollect
who is gone before her, who is following,
and what remains for the world to offer ;

* Jer. xxxi. 21.

‘ my heart cries, *I loathe it, I would not live always*’;—‘ I thank God that *I am also to go.*’

‘ I perceive I did not know how much my life was bound up in the life of a creature:—when *she* went, nothing seemed left:—one is not; and the rest seem a few thin and scattered remains.’

‘ And yet how much better for my lamb to be suddenly housed,—to slip unexpectedly into the fold to which I was conducting her, than remain exposed here?—perhaps become a victim?’

‘ I cried, ‘ O Lord, spare my child!—he did—but not as I meant,—he snatched it from danger, and took it to his own home.’

‘ I have often prayed, ‘ Lord, soften my heart! humble my pride! destroy my levity!—I knew enough of his way to fear the *means*; and he has, in mercy towards me, regarded my *soul* more than my *feelings.*’

‘ I prayed earnestly for her life,—duty

‘ compelled me to say ‘ *thy will be done,*’
 ‘ —but I *meant* nothing.’

‘ O my God, how long hast thou come
 ‘ *seeking fruit on this tree*¹ ! how much
 ‘ hast thou done to cultivate it ! —shall it
 ‘ still remain fruitless ? —shall it be cut down
 ‘ after all ?’

‘ My passions forged impressions that she
 ‘ would live ; but I now plainly perceive I
 ‘ am called to regard *God*, and not *im-
 pressions*.’

‘ I have been long like one in a fever,
 ‘ attended at times with a strong delirium :
 ‘ —I begged hard that I might not be bled,
 ‘ but he meant a cure, and pierced my
 ‘ heart.’

‘ O how slender, how brittle, the thread
 ‘ on which hang all my earthly joys !’

‘ I wish ever to be asking ‘ am I ready,
 ‘ should he send again and take ***, or ***,
 ‘ or myself ? —*Setting my house in order*²
 ‘ will not make death approach sooner ; but,
 ‘ that it will render his coming much *easier*,
 ‘ I feel by sad experience.’

‘ When I pass by the blaze of dissipation

¹ Luke xiii. 7.

² Isa. xxxviii. 1.

• and intemperance, I feel a moment's re-
• lief.—I say to my heart, 'be still;—at
• least she is not left to follow these ignes
• fatui:—how much better is even the
• grave for my T—— than *the end of those*
• *things*¹ ?'

‘ It is vain for me to wish, as I have
done, to leave the world and go to my
father that I might enquire into the whole
of the case;—the reasons, the steps, the
issue, &c.—In a short time I shall,—but
he says enough *now*, if I have ears to hear.’

‘ In the mean time, help me, O my God
‘ and Father, to recollect that I received
‘ this drop of earthly comfort from a spring
‘ which still remains!—help me to feel that
‘ nothing *essential* is altered! *for with thee*
‘ *is the fountain of life*² :—part of my-
‘ self is already gone to thee, help what
‘ remains to follow.’ * * * * *

If this humble attempt to improve your affliction has been attended with any suc-

cess, you will readily admit a few concluding hints with respect to

OUR DUTY in such circumstances.—And one of the first, and principal duties of the state, is, as hath been expressed, to ACKNOWLEDGE GOD in it.—It was charged upon some, that they *returned not to him that smote them*, nor *sought the Lord*¹ in their distress. On the contrary, the clear apprehension Job had of a divine hand in his afflictions, is as instructive as his patience under them. While *Grief rent his mantle*, *Faith fell down and worshipped*,—‘*The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away*,’ ‘*blessed be the name of the Lord*².’ Let us learn from him never to lose sight of the *Author*, by an undue regard to the mere *circumstances* of our loss.—We may think and speak of the symptoms and stages of the late removal;—of the physicians, of the remedies, &c. in their supposed right or wrong application; but not so as to forget that an unerring Providence presided over the whole,

¹ Isa. ix. 13.

² Job i. 23.

yea actually conducted every part on reasons as righteous as inscrutable.

Whatever may appear to us peculiar in the sick chamber, the whole was but God's intended method of removing one, who had lived his *full* (i. e. his *appointed*) time. *Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee: thou hast appointed him his bounds which he cannot pass*¹. Instead of fixing our attention upon means and creatures, of which we know so very little, let us turn to him who wrought by these instruments, and merely effected his own determinations by them. *Cease from man, for wherein is he to be accounted of*²?—let not the creature hide the Creator, nor present things remain the fatal screen of the future, but, in every occurrence, mark the great cause, *of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things*³:—who numbereth the *very hairs of our head*, and without whom even a *sparrow falls not to the ground*⁴.

While others, therefore, are wandering without an object, and bereaved without a

¹ Job xiv. 5, 6.

² Isa. ii. 22.

³ Rom. xi. 36.

⁴ Matt. x. 29, 30.

comforter, yea, are going to their worst enemy for relief, let us endeavour to say with Peter, ‘Lord, *to whom shall we go*² but to THEE?’—Consider the great physician as now proposing a most serious question to your conscience, ‘*wilt thou be made whole*³?’ may the language of your heart be that of the apostle’s, “if by ‘*any means*³’ then, though seemingly swallowed up of this grief, like Jonah, you shall find a resource *in* it, and finally be preserved *by* it⁴.—This dart, like that which once pierced an imposthume in battle, shall bring health with its wound: and you shall be enabled, with many that are gone before you, to say ‘*the Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death*⁵’.

Duty also directs you to **MODERATE YOUR GRIEF**.—Our heavenly Father, who *knows our frame, and remembers that we are but dust*⁶, allows us to mourn when he afflicts us; he often, in his providence, calls us to it, and charges us to *weep with*

¹ John vi. 62.

⁴ Jonah ii. 7—10.

² John vi. 67.

⁵ Ps. cxviii. 18.

³ Phil. iii. 11.

⁶ Ps. ciii. 14.

them that weep¹ :—but he admonishes us also of a danger on each hand. ‘ *My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him²*.’—If we seriously profess Christianity, our very profession implies, (not only a subjection to our Lord’s will but,) that we have special resources in our affliction; several of which have been already named.—That, among other of our privileges, there is *a peace from God which passeth all understanding, to keep our hearts and minds³* through life and death: and that we have many reasons for *not sorrowing as others who have no hope⁴*.—Besides which, Christians have a post of honour to maintain:—an *high calling⁵* to demonstrate and commend:—we shall (like the pilot in a storm) be brought to our principles; and, *as sorrowful yet always rejoicing⁶*, should prove that we have them not now to learn.

On the contrary, there is such a thing as nursing and cherishing our grief;—employ-

¹ Rom. viii. 15.

² Heb. xi. 5.

³ Thes. iv. 13.

⁴ Phil. iii. 14.

⁵ Phil. iv. 7.

⁶ 2 Cor. vi. 10.

ing a “busy meddling memory to muster up past endearments,” and personate a vast variety of tender and heart-rending circumstances.—There is a tearing open the wound afresh by images and remembrances, and thereby multiplying those pangs which constitute the very bitterness of death itself. Our melancholy exceedingly affects this voluntary torture; it seeks expedients, and will listen to the most unjust and aggravated accusations which can approach a tender conscience respecting the deceased. But conscience should rather be concerned to repress such a disposition.—It is a temptation.—It desperately strives to retain what God has determined to remove:—in some cases, it seeks to penetrate an abyss he forbids even conjecture to explore: and, while it unfits the mourner for the pressing duties of his station, it leads to that *sorrow of the world which worketh death*¹ to his body, soul, and christian character.—How different and superior the sentiments of DAVID!—*His servants said unto him, ‘What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast*

‘ and weep for the child while it was alive,
 ‘ but when the child was dead, thou didst
 ‘ rise and eat bread.’ And he said, ‘ While
 ‘ the child was yet alive, I fasted and
 ‘ wept: for I said, who can tell whether
 ‘ God will be gracious to me, that the
 ‘ child may live; but now he is dead,
 ‘ wherefore should I fast?—can I bring
 ‘ him back again?—I SHALL GO TO HIM,
 ‘ BUT HE SHALL NOT RETURN TO ME.’

Present circumstances also admonish you to KNOW YOUR OPPORTUNITY, and to improve this season as peculiarly favourable for spiritual advancement.—There is a tide in the concerns of religion; the scripture calls it the *day of visitation*², and sends us to the *stork* and to the *swallow*³ for instruction respecting it.—Your heart is now soft, its fascinations withdrawn, and the call, loud and affecting; endeavour, therefore, to take the benefit of a remedy you feel so expensive.

If, in a sense, “ smitten Friends are Angels sent on errands full of love,” instead of weeping over their tombs, let us listen to the voice which properly arises from them;

¹ 2 Sam. xii. 21—23. ² Luke xix. 44. ³ Jer. viii. 7.

especially

especially if it be our privilege to bury one who, like Abel, *being dead yet speaketh*¹; and who would be ready to say to his mourners, ‘*Weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children*²;—‘*I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*³, and received my crown.—I cannot now come to weep with you, but you may ascend and rejoice with me, where there is *no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, for the former things are passed away*⁴.—If you truly love me; prepare to follow me.—If you earnestly wish to see me again, seek not the living among the dead, but arise, and become a follower of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises⁵.—Take that heavenly lamp which shineth as a light in a dark place; walk humbly by it till the day dawn, and the day star arise in your heart⁶.—Haste, my beloved, towards the things which eye hath not seen⁷; and, ere the eternal day break, and the

¹ Heb. xi. 4.² Luke xxiii. 28.³ 2 Tim. iv. 7.⁴ Rev. xxi. 4.⁵ Heb. vi. 1, 2.⁶ 2 Pet. i. 19.⁷ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

‘ present

‘ present shadows flee away, run with patience the race set before you, looking unto Jesus¹.—How will my cup overflow to meet you among those who daily come hither out of great tribulation: and, having washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, serve him day and night in his temple²!’

Embrace every method God hath recommended for maintaining communion with him, and obtaining relief from him.—The various ordinances of his House, the encouragements of his Word, the society of his children, and, especially, Prayer.—Often speak to Him who seeth in secret³, and is nigh unto all that call upon him⁴, though, with the Woman of Canaan, you can only say ‘ Lord help me⁵.’—Not only an high commendation, but a miracle followed her request.—She urged it under the greatest discouragements, but you have both a command and a promise, ‘ Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me⁶.’

¹ Heb. xii. 1, 2.

⁴ Ps. cxlv. 18.

² Rev. vii. 14, 15.

⁵ Matt. xv. 25.

³ Mat. vi. 18.

⁶ Ps. l. 15.

And,

And, while you search the Scriptures and attend the Church, you will at once be instructed and encouraged by marking in both those footsteps which we lately considered.

—They are, indeed, not so explicit in the latter; but attention to the scriptural account of the christian character, will greatly assist you in distinguishing real christians from those who, equally forward and corrupt, have at all times assumed their name, and mixed in their society, to their grief and scandal ¹.—Leaving these unhappy *exceptions* to their proper Judge, follow the unerring *Rule* he has put into your hand, and those who walk by it; particularly, such as are your companions in affliction. You will see them passing before you with not only the same wounds in their hearts, but almost the same words in their lips.—Study their course; mark their progress; observe how they held his arm, pleaded at his throne, reposed in his bosom, and magnified his truth, who walked with them in a furnace which, like that of the three children, burnt nothing but their bonds ².

¹ Phil. iii. 18, 19.

² Dan. iii. 25.

But

‘But who is sufficient for these things?’
 —A fourth direction will serve for a reply. To improve the opportunity you discern, and to keep pace with those you approve, SEEK DIVINE ASSISTANCE; or, as St. Paul has expressed it, ‘*be strong in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus*’¹. If, on the one hand, Religion has vast proposals to make; on the other, to be truly religious is a mighty Aim, and can be accomplished only *through HIM that loved us*². Opposing omnipotence to difficulty, was their *secret*, who so gloriously overcame a world that was not worthy of them: read their history in the 11th chapter of the Hebrews, and see what an implicit reliance, called Faith,—a *seeing Him who is invisible*, will perform. That invaluable record seems to say, ‘*Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded*³.’

We are, indeed, called to *aim* and to *act*, and have the greatest promises annexed to the endeavour: but are as frequently reminded that *we are not sufficient of our-*

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 1.

² Rom. viii. 37.

³ Ps. xxii. 4, 5.

selves

selves to think any thing as of ourselves, but that our sufficiency is of God¹. Christ encourages no one to advance on the ground of his own *strength*, any more than on that of his own *desert*:—he is as jealous of the power of his Arm as of the merit of his Blood. He admitted infirmity and misery to be presented as a *complaint*, but never as an *objection*.—I have observed it not uncommon for this to be a season of peculiar temptation; a spiritual enemy stands ready to defeat every spiritual opportunity: but our help is near, and our example, in such conflicts, excellent.—*For this thing I besought the Lord thrice:—and he said unto me, My GRACE is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness!* May you be enabled to add with the apostle, *most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest on me².*

Again, that you may seek cheerfully this assistance, REGARD YOUR ENCOURAGEMENTS.—To recover our alienated minds, and gain our confidence, God meets us in a

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 5.

² 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

way suited to our necessities, and to our fears.—Resist, as the vilest temptation, any doubt of that *Good will to Man* which was sung at the Redeemer's birth.—What hath God not done in order to commend his love?—By every expression of tender concern he, in the person of a *Man of sorrows*, invites the guilty, the weary, the trembling, and the tempted to come unto him; assuring them that he will neither *break the bruised reed*, nor *quench the smoking flax*¹.

If *God is love*², “Christ is God stooping to the senses, and speaking to the heart of man:” ever saying, ‘look to my Cross, ‘take my Yoke, and lean upon my Arm, ‘and ye shall find rest.’—He sought the house of mourning to comfort the sisters of Lazarus: he met a widow following her only child, and, *when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, ‘weep not’*³:—May he meet you at this time, my Dear Friend, with consolations which none but himself can afford: and then, at the very grave, shall that saying be brought to pass, ‘*Death is swallowed up in victory*’.

¹ Matt. xii. 20. ² 1 John iv. 16. ³ Luke vii. 13.

*tory.*³

• *tory*^{1.} Let such fear, as despise our heavenly *Friend*, our *Prospects*, *Provisions*, *Companions*, and sense of *Duty* :—God with us, and all things in God, is light in darkness, life in death. The words which revived him, who stiles himself *your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ*², remain to cheer a solitude darker (if possible) than his. ‘ *Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen: and have the keys of hell and of death*³ ?

To conclude: the late event solemnly repeats its author’s charge “ **BE YE ALSO READY**^{4.} ” Your friend is gone: your following is certain: it may be sudden; it may be next.—But should it take place this night, and find you provided with nothing better for the change than the miserable subterfuges of the prophanes, or the scarcely less miserable supports of the formal, what an alarm (if you are not left to the most affect-

^{1.} 1 Cor. xv. 54.
³ Rev. i. 17, 18.

² Rev. i. 9.
⁴ Matt. xxiv. 44.

ing delusion or stupidity) will it occasion! — What an awful transition to pass from the SAVIOUR to the JUDGE! without love to him; without even an acquaintance with him; unwilling, unreconciled, unrenewed! — And to Him who has so often invited you, warned you, and, at times, affected your conscience with the truths we have been considering! — What a subject for eternal reflection ‘*You would not come to him that you might have life¹*’!

God forbid, however, that this should be *your case*! I only suppose it, lest it should; and it is too common to render the supposition improper. From such a danger we cannot be too secure; and, therefore, having lately seen how soon *the night cometh when no man can work*², let us seek *to-day*, in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, that peace and safety which you must be conscious can never be found *out* of it, and which it may be too late to seek *to-morrow*.

Some things belonging to our important change are wisely hid from us; nothing, however, is more plain than that it is *near*, and

¹ John v. 40.

² John ix. 4.

there-

therefore demands our most serious attention:—that it is finally *decisive*¹, and therefore warns us to watch against those errors which eternity cannot rectify:—and, that the hour is *uncertain*, and, therefore, calls us to stand prepared.—With our *loins girded*, and our *lights burning*, may we thus wait for our Lord!

Impressed with such views, I have often wished to take the afflicted by the hand, and lead them to a Resource their passions have obscured. I have wished them to see that the christian hope is then most alive and full of immortality, when every other hope perishes, these wishes, and the request of a friend, (who was solicitous to obtain something of this kind more compendious than he had yet seen) have drawn from me some imperfect hints.—Imperfect, however, as they are, like a few words, presented by the road's side to the eye of a weary traveller, they may afford you some present direction and relief.—And should He, who is pleased to employ the feeblest means in his greatest work, conduct you by them, (though but

¹ Matt. xxv. 46.

a single step on your way) towards a *Morning without clouds*—a *House without mourning*,—the service of your affectionate Friend will obtain an high reward.



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